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PATTERNS OF CHILD CARE USE

The ABS Child Care Survey conducted in March 1996 showed that almost half (48%) of the children in Australia under 12 years used some form of child care (see table 7.14). Of those children who used child care, 40% used formal care. Use of formal care has steadily increased since 1987. In 1996, 20% of children under 12 years used formal care.

In the table, child care refers to arrangements made for the care of children under 12 years of age, excluding care which is provided by custodial parent(s). Formal child care is regulated care which takes place away from the child's home and includes attendance at preschool, a child care centre, family day care and occasional care (short periods of care generally available to children under five, which allow parents to shop, attend appointments etc.). Informal care is non-regulated and can take place in the child's home or elsewhere. It is most commonly provided by relatives (including a non-custodial parent) of the child, but also includes care by friends, neighbours and paid baby sitters.

As well as seeking information on the types of child care being accessed, the ABS Child Care Survey in March 1996 asked parents to indicate whether their requirements for formal child care were being met. In some cases, parents reported a requirement for formal child care, while in others the children were already accessing formal care but required more. In 1996, around 8% of children (261,700) under 12 years of age required formal care which they were not receiving (see table 7.15). Before and after school care was reported as the main type required by about one-third (32%) of these children. Occasional or irregular care accounted for a further 31% of care required for children under 12 years of age. These two categories combined have accounted for over half of the formal care requirements since 1990.

7.14 CHILD CARE ARRANGEMENTS

Type of care used	June 1987		November 1990		June 1993		March 1996	
	'000	%	'000	%	'000	%	'000	%
Type of care(a)								
Formal care only	264.0	9.1	278.0	9.3	338.7	11.0	373.5	12.0
Informal care only	915.1	31.7	1 018.1	33.9	908.7	29.4	877.5	28.3
Formal and informal care	191.3	6.6	252.5	8.4	257.5	8.3	250.9	8.1
Total who used care	1 370.3	47.4	1 548.5	51.6	1 504.9	48.8	1 501.8	48.4
Total formal care	455.2	15.7	530.4	17.7	596.2	19.3	624.4	20.1
Total informal care	1 106.4	38.3	1 270.5	42.3	1 166.2	37.8	1 128.3	36.4
Children who used neither formal nor informal care	1 517.6	52.5	1 455.2	48.4	1 581.0	51.2	1 601.0	51.6
Total children	2 887.9	100.0	3 003.7	100.0	3 085.9	100.0	3 102.8	100.0

(a) Components do not add to total as children could use more than one type of care.

Source: Child Care, Australia (4402.0).

7.15 MAIN TYPE OF (ADDITIONAL) FORMAL CARE REQUIRED

Main type of care required(a)	November 1990		June 1993		March 1996	
	'000	%	'000	%	'000	%
Before and after school care program	128.8	25.1	125.1	25.6	84.9	32.4
Long day care centre	89.3	17.4	63.8	13.0	39.0	14.9
Family day care	75.7	14.7	60.2	12.3	29.0	11.1
Occasional care(b)(c)	—	—	191.8	39.2	82.1	31.4
Preschool	54.3	10.6	30.0	6.1	20.3	7.8
Other formal care(c)	166.0	32.3	18.3	3.7	6.4	2.4
Total	514.1	100.0	489.2	100.0	261.7	100.0

(a) Includes some children already accessing formal child care. (b) Includes irregular care required for children under 12 years of age. (c) Occasional care was not separately identified in the 1990 Child Care Survey. It was included in 'Other formal care'.
Source: *Child Care, Australia* (4402.0).

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